

GUZ 31 Obadiah

*Bible Commentary:
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David Guzik's Commentary On
31 Obadiah
Biblical Text – TEV (Good News Bible)

Edom Will Be Humbled

Oba 1:1 This is the prophecy of Obadiah—what the Sovereign LORD said about the nation of Edom. The LORD has sent his messenger to the nations, and we have heard his message: "Get ready! Let us go to war against Edom!"

Oba 1:2 The LORD says to Edom, "I will make you weak; everyone will despise you."

Oba 1:3 Your pride has deceived you. Your capital is a fortress of solid rock; your home is high in the mountains, and so you say to yourself, 'Who can ever pull me down?'

Oba 1:4 Even though you make your home as high as an eagle's nest, so that it seems to be among the stars, yet I will pull you down.

Oba 1:5 "When thieves come at night, they take only what they want. When people gather grapes, they always leave a few. But your enemies have wiped you out completely."

Oba 1:6 Descendants of Esau, your treasures have been looted.

Oba 1:7 Your allies have deceived you; they have driven you from your country. People who were at peace with you have now conquered you. Those friends who ate with you have laid a trap for you; they say of you, 'Where is all that cleverness he had?'

Oba 1:8 "On the day I punish Edom, I will destroy their clever men and wipe out all their wisdom."

Oba 1:9 The fighting men of Teman will be terrified, and every soldier in Edom will be killed.

Edom's Violence Against Jacob

Oba 1:10 "Because you robbed and killed your relatives, the descendants of Jacob, you will be destroyed and dishonored forever.

Oba 1:11 You stood aside on that day when enemies broke down their gates. You were as bad as those strangers who carried off Jerusalem's wealth and divided it among themselves.

Oba 1:12 You should not have gloated over the misfortune of your relatives in Judah. You should not have been glad on the day of their ruin. You should not have laughed at them in their distress.

Oba 1:13 You should not have entered the city of my people to gloat over their suffering and to seize their riches on the day of their disaster.

Oba 1:14 You should not have stood at the crossroads to catch those trying to escape. You should not have handed them over to the enemy on the day of their distress.

The Day of the Lord Is Near

Oba 1:15 "The day is near when I, the LORD, will judge all nations. Edom, what you have done will be done to you. You will get back what you have given.

Oba 1:16 My people have drunk a bitter cup of punishment on my sacred hill. But all the surrounding nations will drink a still more bitter cup of punishment; they will drink it all and vanish away.

Oba 1:17 "But on Mount Zion some will escape, and it will be a sacred place. The people of Jacob will possess the land that is theirs by right.

Oba 1:18 The people of Jacob and of Joseph will be like fire; they will destroy the people of Esau as fire burns stubble. No descendant of Esau will survive. I, the LORD, have spoken.

The Kingdom of the Lord

Oba 1:19 "People from southern Judah will occupy Edom; those from the western foothills will capture Philistia. Israelites will possess the territory of Ephraim and Samaria; the people of Benjamin will take Gilead.

Oba 1:20 The army of exiles from northern Israel will return and conquer Phoenicia as far north as Zarephath. The exiles from Jerusalem who are in Sardis will capture the towns of southern Judah.

Oba 1:21 The victorious men of Jerusalem will attack Edom and rule over it. And the LORD himself will be king."

Obadiah 1:1-21

Obadiah - Judgment Against Israel's Brother

A. Judgment against Edom.

Oba 1:1-9 is paralleled remarkably in Jer 49:7-22, so Jeremiah probably had Obadiah's prophecy before him as he wrote and ministered.

1. (1-4) Obadiah announces judgment against Edom and her pride.

The vision of Obadiah.

**Thus says the Lord GOD concerning Edom
(We have heard a report from the LORD,
And a messenger has been sent among the nations,
saying,**

"Arise, and let us rise up against her for battle":

**"Behold, I will make you small among the nations;
You shall be greatly despised.**

**The pride of your heart has deceived you,
You who dwell in the clefts of the rock,
Whose habitation is high;
You who say in your heart, 'Who will bring me down
to the ground?'**

Though you ascend as high as the eagle,

**And though you set your nest among the stars,
From there I will bring you down," says the LORD.**

a. **The vision of Obadiah:** The Hebrew name **Obadiah** means "Worshipper of Yahweh" or "Servant of Yahweh." There are 13 "Obadiyahs" in the Old Testament, and one of these may be the Obadiah who wrote this book.

- An Obadiah was an officer in King Ahab of Israel's court and hid God's prophets in a cave (1Ki 18:3).
- An Obadiah was sent out by King Jehoshaphat of Judah to teach the law in the cities of Judah (2Ch 17:7).
- An Obadiah was one of the overseers who helped repair the temple in the days of Josiah, King of Judah (2Ch 34:12).
- An Obadiah was a priest in the days of Nehemiah (Neh 10:5).

b. **Thus says the Lord GOD concerning Edom:** Obadiah's prophecy is unique because he doesn't deal with Judah or Israel much at all. His focus is on the sin of Edom and the judgment coming upon them. Who were the Edomites?

- The Edomites are the people descended from Esau, the son of Isaac and Rebekah and the brother of Jacob (Gen 25:19-34). Esau was nicknamed "Edom" (which means, "red") probably because he had red hair.
- Esau eventually settled in the area of Mount Seir and absorbed a people known as the Horites (Gen 36:8-43, which refers to Edomite rulers as *dukes* in the King James Version).
- When Israel came out of Egypt and wanted to pass through the land of the Edomites to enter into the Promised Land, the Edomites wouldn't let them (Num 20:14-21).

- The Edomites opposed Saul and were conquered under David and Solomon (1Sa 14:47, 2Sa 8:14, 1Ki 9:26).
- In the days of King Jehoshaphat of Judah, Edom joined with Moab and Ammon to attack Judah, but the Lord fought for Judah and defeated them (2Ch 20:1-27, the famous battle that was led with praise).
- The Edomites successfully rebelled against King Jehoram of Judah (2Ki 8:16-22).
- King Amaziah of Judah brought them back under subjugation (2Ki 14:9-11).
- The Edomites again attacked Judah in the days of King Ahaz (2Ch 28:17).
- They fought side by side with the Jews in the rebellion against Rome in A.D. 66-70 and were crushed by Rome, never to be heard of as a people again. The predictions of Oba 1:10; Oba 1:18 were proven true.

c. **Concerning Edom:** Because of what this book says of Edom and Jerusalem, we can gather a date for Obadiah's ministry. The only time markers we have in the book are the attack against Jerusalem (Oba 1:10-14) and the fact that this passage also seems to indicate that Edom was not under Judah's rule at the time.

- 2Ch 21:16-17 describes an attack against Jerusalem during the reign of Jehoram (848-841 B.C.) by the Philistines and the Arabians.
- 2 Kings 24, 25 describe the attack of the Babylonians against Jerusalem in 586 B.C.
 - i. Probably the better choice is the earlier attack, because Oba 1:10-14 doesn't seem to indicate that Jerusalem was totally destroyed, as it was under the Babylonian attack. If Obadiah's prophecy considers this time period under Jehoram (848-841 B.C.), it

makes him a contemporary of the prophet Elisha and also makes him the earliest of the prophets, probably beating Joel by a few years. It also means that this Prophet Obadiah *may* be the same man mentioned in 2Ch 17:7.

d. **A report from the LORD... Arise, and let us rise up against her for battle:** Obadiah receives a "news bulletin" from the LORD. "This just in - God is bringing nations against Edom in battle." As a result of the coming battle, God will **make** Edom **small among the nations** and **greatly despised**.

e. **The pride of your heart has deceived you:** This helps explain *why* God is bringing judgment against Edom. They are filled with **pride**, and it **has deceived** them.

i. **Pride** is very *deceptive*. It makes us think things about ourselves and others that simply are not true. The Edomites were not the last people **deceived** by **pride**.

f. **You who dwell in the clefts of the rock:** The Edomites didn't have all that much to be proud about. They were a small, relatively poor and insignificant nation. Yet what they could be proud about, they were - they lived in an area of great natural fortifications and strength, so they boasted in the **clefts of the rock** around them.

i. **Though you exalt yourself as high as the eagle:** And boast they did! Pride is so ingrained in fallen human nature that even if we don't have much to be proud about, we'll find *something* to exalt our self. This also reminds us that we don't have to be rich or powerful or great to be filled will pride. Sometimes those who have the least reason for pride have the most of it.

ii. The Edomites boasted in their natural defenses. The ancient city of Petra - once the capital city of Edom, known as Sela – had amazing defenses. It is a city carved into the rock, accessible by a narrow canyon almost a mile long. At the end of the canyon there is a spectacular city carved in stone, and seemingly incapable of being conquered by any army.

iii. The Edomites boasted in their wisdom. The men of Edom – especially of the city **Teman** – were noted for their wisdom. The phrase *men of the East* in the Old Testament often refers to men from Edom, and passages like 1Ki 4:30 declare the great wisdom of the *men of the East*. As well, Jer 49:7 says of Edom: *Is wisdom no more in Teman? Has counsel perished from the prudent? Has their wisdom vanished?* This was another source of pride for the Edomites.

iv. The Edomites boasted in their alliances and trusted in their allies – their *confederacy*, the *men at peace with you* (Oba 1:7). They thought that their alliances made them strong, and they were proud because of that strength.

g. **From there I will bring you down:** The sobering truth about our pride is that God can **bring us down** anytime. He can shatter our proud deception and bring us low.

2. (5-9) *God's judgment against Edom will be complete.*

**"If thieves had come to you,
If robbers by night;
Oh, how you will be cut off! –
Would they not have stolen till they had enough?
If grape-gatherers had come to you,
Would they not have left some gleanings?
Oh, how Esau shall be searched out!
How his hidden treasures shall be sought after!"**

**All the men in your confederacy
Shall force you to the border;
The men at peace with you
Shall deceive you *and* prevail against you.
Those who eat your bread shall lay a trap for you.
No one is aware of it.
Will I not in that day," says the LORD,
"Even destroy the wise *men* from Edom,
And understanding from the mountains of Esau?
Then your mighty men, O Teman, shall be dismayed,
To the end that everyone from the mountains of Esau
May be cut off by slaughter."**

a. **Would they not have stolen till they had enough?**

Obadiah says that the judgment coming upon Edom will be far worse than what happens when **robbers** come and steal, because they usually stop when they have **enough**. The judgment coming against Edom will be far more complete (**everyone from the mountains of Esau may be cut off by slaughter**).

- i. The Edomites were proud of their great natural defenses, but God would break their pride and bring them low.

b. **Men at peace with you shall deceive you:** When God brings judgment against Edom, they will know the sting of treachery against them. The alliances they once trusted in would come to nothing, and they would be double-crossed by their former friends.

- i. The Edomites were proud of their political alliances, but God would break their pride and bring them low.

c. **Destroy the wise men from Edom, and understanding from the mountains of Esau:** The Edomites were renowned for their great wisdom, but God would bring such great judgment that even their wise men would be destroyed.

i. The Edomites were proud of their reputation for wisdom, but God would break their pride and bring them low.

3. (10-14) *Why judgment is coming against Edom.*

**"For violence against your brother Jacob,
Shame shall cover you,
And you shall be cut off forever.
In the day that you stood on the other side;
In the day that strangers carried captive his forces,
When foreigners entered his gates
And cast lots for Jerusalem;
Even you were as one of them.
But you should not have gazed on the day of your
brother
In the day of his captivity;
Nor should you have rejoiced over the children of
Judah
In the day of their destruction;
Nor should you have spoken proudly
In the day of distress.
You should not have entered the gate of My people
In the day of their calamity.
Indeed, you should not have gazed on their affliction
In the day of their calamity,
Nor laid *hands* on their substance
In the day of their calamity.
You should not have stood at the crossroads
To cut off those among them who escaped;
Nor should you have delivered up those among them
who remained
In the day of distress."**

a. **For your violence against your brother Jacob:**
The family lines of both Israel and Edom go back to a common ancestor - Isaac. Esau (Edom) was the **brother**

of **Jacob** (Israel). This made Edom's sin against Israel all the worse.

- i. Some sins become worse depending on whom we sin against. It is sin to treat someone else badly; it is *worse* to treat a *brother or sister in Jesus* badly. It is sin to speak harshly to anyone; it is *worse* to speak harshly to your *husband or wife*.
- b. **In that day you stood on the other side:** What did Edom do when **strangers** attacked Judah and **foreigners entered his gates?** *Nothing.* They stood by and cheered for Judah's misery (**nor should you have rejoiced**).
 - i. Sometimes doing *nothing* is a great sin. Num 32:23 speaks of the sin that *will find you out*, and the sin it speaks of is the sin of doing *nothing*.
 - ii. Edom actually did worse than nothing; they **rejoiced** over another's misfortune and suffering and used it as an occasion to exalt themselves (**nor should you have spoken proudly in the day of distress**).
- c. **Nor laid hands on their substance:** Edom's sin started with doing *nothing*, then progressed to *pride* over Judah's distress. Soon, they took advantage of their brother Judah's misfortune and **laid hands on their substance**.
- d. **You should not have stood at the crossroads to cut off those among them who escaped:** The final progression of Edom's sin was worst of all - they joined in the attack against vulnerable Judah. When they encountered people from Judah fleeing southward from the attacking army, they killed them (**cut off**) or gave them over to the enemy as prisoners (**delivered up those among them who remained**).

- i. "Sin proceeds by degrees; neither is any man at his worst at first." (Trapp)
- e. **In the day of his captivity... in the day of distress... in the day of calamity:** All in all, Edom treated God's people terribly when **distress** and **calamity** came upon them. For all this, God's judgment was coming upon them.
 - First they did nothing.
 - Then they rejoiced in their distress and calamity.
 - Then they took advantage of their vulnerable state.
 - Then they joined in the violence against God's people.
 - i. Are we guilty of the same – or worse – when we see others in **distress** or **calamity**? If so, God sees it as sin and He must deal with it in our life.

B. Deliverance on Mount Zion.

1. (15-16) *A promise of judgment against Edom.*

**"For the day of the LORD upon all the nations is near;
As you have done, it shall be done to you;
Your reprisal shall return upon your own head.
For as you drank on my holy mountain,
So shall all the nations drink continually;
Yes, they shall drink, and swallow,
And they shall be as though they had never been."**

- a. **The day of the LORD upon all the nations is near:** God wants Edom to know that though distress and calamity came upon Judah, it can and will come upon Edom also. That day is **near**.
- b. **As you have done, it shall be done to you:** God will give simple *justice* to the Edomites, no more and no less. What they did to the people of Judah will also be done to them. The same principle is true for us, so if we

want mercy from God, we do well to give mercy to others.

- i. There is a sense in which God's judgment against Edom was just the fulfillment of His promise to Abraham in Gen 12:3 : *I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you.* The Edomites cursed Israel, so they were cursed. If we want to be blessed, we should bless the Jewish people.
2. (17-20) *God will use Israel to bring judgment against Edom.*

**"But on Mount Zion there shall be deliverance,
And there shall be holiness;
The house of Jacob shall possess their possessions.
The house of Jacob shall be a fire,
And the house of Joseph a flame;
But the house of Esau shall be stubble;
They shall kindle them and devour them,
And no survivor shall remain of the house of Esau,"
For the LORD has spoken.
The South shall possess the mountains of Esau,
And the Lowland shall possess Philistia.
They shall possess the fields of Ephraim
And the fields of Samaria.
Benjamin shall possess Gilead.
And the captives of this host of the children of Israel
Shall possess the land of the Canaanites
As far as Zarephath.
The captives of Jerusalem who are in Sepharad
Shall possess the cities of the South.**

- a. **On Mount Zion there shall be deliverance:** The trials and burdens among God's people are only temporary, because among them **there shall be deliverance**. However, the attack coming against Edom

will be different - Israel will be the **fire** and they will be the **stubble**, and Edom will be completely devoured.

i. The word of the LORD through Obadiah proved true. The Edomites fought side by side with the Jews in the rebellion against Rome in A.D. 66-70 and were crushed by Rome, never to be heard of as a people again. The predictions of Oba 1:10; Oba 1:18 were precisely fulfilled. You just won't meet an Edomite today.

b. **The South shall possess the mountains of Esau:** Obadiah looks forward to a coming day when Israel will occupy and **possess** the land that once belonged to **Esau**. Though the modern borders of Israel do not encompass the ancient lands of Edom, we can trust that they one day will, either in this age or in the age to come.

i. **The house of Jacob shall possess their possessions:** Possessing these other lands can only happen when we first possess what is ours. God has given us a rich heritage of every *spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ* (Eph 1:3), but how much do we actually **possess**? God wants His people to **possess their possessions**.

3. (21) *Saviors come to Mount Zion.*

**Then saviors shall come to Mount Zion
To judge the mountains of Esau,
And the kingdom shall be the LORD's.**

a. **Saviors shall come to Mount Zion:** The idea isn't that there are many **saviors** in an ultimate sense. Here, the word "**saviors**" has the sense of "deliverers." The contrast is plain; Edom will be completely destroyed, and no **saviors** shall help her, but **saviors shall come to Mount Zion.**

b. **To judge the mountains of Esau:** They will **judge the mountains of Esau** in at least three ways:

- The presence of deliverers is a judgment against Edom, because Edom will have no deliverers.
- The judges will rule over the territory of Edom.
- The judges will actually sit in judgment over Edom and their sins.

c. **And the kingdom shall be the LORD's:** The brief prophecy of Obadiah ends on this high note. The Edomites seemed to have their day against God's people but at the end of it all, **the kingdom shall be the LORD's**. He knows how to take care of God's people and to advance His kingdom in a glorious way.

i. This note of encouragement may be the central purpose for this prophecy of Obadiah. We wonder if it ever had much of a reading in the streets or palaces of Edom; but it certainly was received as welcome encouragement among the suffering people of God. Obadiah tells all God's people: "Don't worry about those who ignore your need, those who rejoice at your problems, those who take advantage of your crises, those who join their hands with others in attacking you. I will take care of them."